

KNOWING WHAT TO LOOK FOR

The following behaviors in parents and children are indicative of healthy attachment. These behaviors will help guide your assessments of attachment.

Birth to Age One

The Child:

- ✓ Appears alert (vocalizes, responds to stimuli, lifts head);
- ✓ Responds to the human voice;
- ✓ Appears quieted by soft sounds;
- ✓ Appears startled by loud noises;
- ✓ Responds to the human face — shows interest in the face, responds to facial expression, reaches out to the face;
- ✓ Tracks objects with the eyes;
- ✓ Vocalizes often with expression;
- ✓ Demonstrates expected motor development;
- ✓ Enjoys physical contact;
- ✓ Shows physical discomfort;
- ✓ Appears to be comforted easily;
- ✓ Appears to be outgoing;
- ✓ Has good muscle tone;
- ✓ Explores the environment;
- ✓ React to stimuli in the environment;
- ✓ Shows preference for care by parents.

The Parents:

- ✓ Demonstrate interest in holding the baby;
- ✓ Show interest to face to face contact;
- ✓ Respond to the baby's cries or need to be comforted;
- ✓ Respond to the infant's vocalization, verbal expression;
- ✓ Change voice tone when talking to or about the baby;
- ✓ Use a quiet, soothing voice to claim the baby;
- ✓ Enjoy close physical contact with the child — are relaxed during contact and seek contact;
- ✓ Seek and initiate positive interaction with the child
- ✓ Demonstrate interest in and encourage age-appropriate development in the child;
- ✓ Identify qualities in the child that remind the parent of themselves or other family members.

Bayless, L., Love, L (Eds) (1990). A Guide For Foster and Adoptive Practice. Assessing, Attachment, Separation and Loss. Atlanta, GA: Child Welfare Institute.

Ages One to Five

The Child:

- ✓ Responds to parental efforts to help or assist;
- ✓ Responds to parental directions;
- ✓ Explores the environment in a way that meets expectation for the child's age;
- ✓ Can play independently and keep occupied in a positive way;
- ✓ Appears relaxed and happy;
- ✓ Is able to express emotions;
- ✓ Reacts to pain and pleasure;
- ✓ Responds in an age-appropriate way to stimuli in the environment;
- ✓ Uses speech appropriate to developmental level;
- ✓ Expresses frustration, especially regarding ability and desire to accomplish new tasks;
- ✓ Responds to the limits set by parents;
- ✓ Exhibits observable fears that are age-appropriate;
- ✓ Reacts positively to physical closeness;
- ✓ Responds to separation from parents;
- ✓ Responds to parents' return;
- ✓ Seeks interaction from parents;
- ✓ Seeks positive approval from parents.

The Parents:

- ✓ Demonstrate interest in the child's activities;
- ✓ Show awareness and interest in the child's development;
- ✓ Demonstrate expectations that match the child's developmental level;
- ✓ Employ disciplinary measures that match the child's age and development;
- ✓ Respond positively to the child's efforts to gain attention;
- ✓ Initiate positive activities with the child;
- ✓ Encourage physical closeness with the child;
- ✓ Respond to the child's expressed needs;
- ✓ Comfort the child in the positive way;
- ✓ Accept expressions of autonomy and encourage age-appropriate independence;
- ✓ See the child as being like or "taking after" someone in the family;
- ✓ Identify and reinforce the child's strengths;
- ✓ Praise, affirm, and reinforce the child's efforts and accomplishments;
- ✓ View the child as a separate and independent person rather than as a resource for meeting parents' need.

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Grade-School-Aged Children

The Child:

- ✓ Is inquisitive about the world and explores the environment in an age-appropriate way;
- ✓ Acts in a way that demonstrates that she/he likes herself/himself;
- ✓ Shows accomplishments and appears proud of them;
- ✓ Performs academically according to ability;
- ✓ Shares and plays with others;
- ✓ Tests limits in a way that is age-appropriate;
- ✓ Tries new tasks;
- ✓ React realistically to making a mistake;
- ✓ Is able to identify own strengths;
- ✓ Expresses emotions appropriate to age;
- ✓ Demonstrates a range of emotions — affection, caring, fear, anger, and acceptance in ways that are normal for developmental level;
- ✓ Exhibits confidence in abilities and does not frequently express lack of confidence by saying "I don't know" or "I can't";
- ✓ Does not exhibit overly dependent behavior by excessive clinging or whining;
- ✓ Reacts positively to parents being in close physical proximity;
- ✓ Feels comfortable in speaking to adults;
- ✓ Smiles easily;
- ✓ Moves in an open, relaxed way — is not rigid;
- ✓ Has positive interaction with siblings and/or peers;
- ✓ Appears comfortable with own sexual identification;
- ✓ Initiates positive interaction with adults.

The Parents:

- ✓ Demonstrate interest in the child's accomplishments;
- ✓ Show interest in the child's school performance;
- ✓ Initiate affectionate overtures;
- ✓ Accept expressions of child's negative overtures;
- ✓ Give support to the child in developing positive peer relationships;
- ✓ Work out problems between siblings effectively;
- ✓ Use disciplinary measures appropriate to the child's age and development;
- ✓ Give the child age-appropriate responsibilities;
- ✓ State in a positive way that the child is like other family members;
- ✓ Support the child in activities that develop independence;
- ✓ Initiate positive activities with the child;
- ✓ Can identify and speak positively about the child's strengths and needs.

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Adolescents

The Adolescent:

- ✓ Is aware of their strengths and needs;
- ✓ Is developing an identity that is separate from the family;
- ✓ Is comfortable with self-image;
- ✓ Is comfortable with personal sexuality;
- ✓ Engages in positive peer interactions;
- ✓ Performs satisfactorily in school;
- ✓ Exhibits signs of conscience development;
- ✓ Does not have serious problems with the law;
- ✓ Has the ability to keep self occupied in non-harmful ways;
- ✓ Can accept reasonable limits – does not always need to be involved in control battles;
- ✓ Develops interests beyond home and ability and family;
- ✓ Is able to express desires for independence;
- ✓ Expresses feelings and emotions in a comfortable way;
- ✓ Is able to express values and beliefs.

The Parents:

- ✓ Give attention to adolescent's abilities and interests;
- ✓ Display interest in the adolescent's school performance;
- ✓ Set limits that match the adolescent's needs and abilities;
- ✓ Use authority and discipline in positive and non-harmful ways;
- ✓ Trust the adolescent;
- ✓ Have reasonable expectations of chores and adolescent's outside activities;
- ✓ Stand by the adolescent if the adolescent gets in trouble;
- ✓ Demonstrate affection;
- ✓ Identify and affirm the adolescent's strengths;
- ✓ Show interest and demonstrate acceptance of adolescent's friends;
- ✓ Believe the adolescent will turn out okay.

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